

WARNING AGAINST TALE-BEARING AND RASH JUDGEMENT

Some of the things the devil does almost every year are to vex and persecute the church severely and to use some members who lack understanding to sow discord among the flock, particularly at the approach of important occasions like the Freedom Day and the Feast of Tabernacles. These are periods when the spiritual activities of the Church are intensified to gather the lost sheep of God to His Kingdom fold by His grace and power and to warn the nations of men against the impending doom or tribulation from God because of their ungodly acts. Scripture says: "For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." – Isaiah 26:21. Please see also Isaiah 60:12; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; etc.

The Church and her members are undergoing manifold temptations, persecutions and tribulations at the instance of the devil in his futile attempt to destroy her and drag all the children of God to destruction. But by God's grace, the true converts who, like St. Paul and others, know why they are serving God, do not look back. Rather, they "glory in tribulations... knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed.." (Romans 5:3-5). These are those who look unto God for their salvation, and who know that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."- Acts 14:22. See also Isaiah 45:22; Hebrews 10:35,36,38,39; 1 John 2:25; etc.

In his parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; Luke 8:4-15), Jesus Christ showed the various types of people who received the kingdom seed or word of God. Some received it by the symbolic way-side, some on stony ground, others among thorns and yet others on good ground.

He pointed out that with the exception of those who received the seed on good ground, all the rest fell away from God's organization for various reasons. These include lack of faith and spiritual understanding; the pleasures and care of this life and the pursuit of riches as well as the persecutions, tribulations and temptations of the devil.

But those who received the seed on good ground are the truly converted who abide in God's Kingdom Organization for their own salvation. They have faith, spiritual understanding and other Christian qualities. Thus, they "in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." – Luke 8:15.

Scriptures show that iniquity or evil could be found in a place like the church of God where righteousness is practised. As it is written: "And more over I saw under the sun the place of judgement, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there." – Ecclesiastes 3:16; also Jeremiah 5:26.

Jesus Christ knew that this would be so, hence he admonished the faithful to endure. He stated: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax

cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matthew 24:12,13). He also said that he would gather out of his church or Kingdom Organization all those who do evil and punish them if they do not repent. – Matthew 13:41,42.

It is my prayer that all who are truly the sheep of God should continue in God's service to the end in order to be saved by God's grace, no matter what the devil may do or use members who lack understanding to do in the church.

Warning

My attention has been drawn to the evil practices of tale-bearing and rash judgement which are now common in some branches of the Church. I am hereby discharging my duty again, as the visible leader of the flock of God in the God's Kingdom Society (GKS), by God's grace, by issuing this godly warning against these practices. Keeping the warning would bring a person God's blessings.

This warning is in line with the charge which God gave to Ezekiel the prophet in those days. As it is written: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul." - Ezekiel 3:17-21

Thus we can see that if anyone despises the warning, he despises God and he will suffer loss. Please see Luke 10:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; Proverbs 9:12; 22:3, etc. I therefore hope the faithful will pay heed to this warning.

Tale-bearing

Tale-bearing carries with it the vices of whispering, gossip, slander and backbiting. So it is difficult to separate one from the others.

Knowing the dangers that go with tale-bearing, God warned: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.." – Leviticus 19:16.

Tale-bearing, slander, backbiting and whispering can make close friends become bitter enemies. Scripture says: "A forward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends." – Proverbs 16:28. Please see also Proverbs 17:9.

Whoever claims to be religious and does not bridle his tongue should know that his claim is of no value. James the apostle stated: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain..." – James 1:26,27. Please see also Proverbs 21:23; 17:27,28; etc.

Unless those who are given to whispering, gossip, slander and backbiting repent by putting a stop to such evil practices, they cannot escape the punishment of God. As it is written: "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was together such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." (Psalm 50:19-22). "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou was not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee: when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." – Isaiah 33:1; Please compare Romans 1:29-32; Proverbs 18:21; etc.

Rash Judgement

The activities of tale-bearers, backbiters, whisperers, slanderers and gossips in the Church have led some members to commit the error of rash judgement.

The tale-bearers carry stories of some things that happen between two or more members and modify or change the content in order to convince the person they are telling the story, knowing the nature of such a person. Then the person to whom such stories are told passes judgement on, and condemns one of the parties concerned without waiting to hear from the party he has condemned. This is backbiting and rash judgement. It is backbiting because the party that is condemned is not there to defend himself; and it is rash judgement because the condemned party's defence is not heard. It is very wrong, ungodly, unscriptural and against the principle of natural justice. It makes one to make a big fool of oneself and it can be very shameful. Scripture says: "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." – Proverbs 18:13.

Before anyone can pass a righteous or balanced judgement on any issue, the one must get the full facts of the case. This calls for hearing from the two parties concerned.

He who is first to bring a matter to you may present it in such a way as to free himself from any blame. Where you are rash, being unwise, you may condemn the other party whose version you have not heard. But God knows the failings of man more than anyone else. Hence He caused it to be written: "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." – Proverbs 18:17.

The Pharisees were among the Jewish religious sects who were bitterly opposed to Jesus Christ. They judged and condemned him unjustly as a false prophet without hearing him. And they sent officers to arrest him. Displeased and certainly embarrassed by their action, Nicodemus challenged them, saying "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" – John 7:51 (But please read verses 25-53).

You may hear some reports against a member, the Committee or elders of any branch of the Church or even against the Lord's Ministry or any individual Minister. Do not pass judgment hastily. Check from the party that has been reported to you so as not to fall into the devil's trap of passing an unrighteous judgement. The report that you hear may be false. And if you do not cross-check, you may condemn the innocent, contrary to God's law. As it is written: "Thou shalt not raise a false report; put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgement; neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause... keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not, for I will not justify the wicked." (Exodus 23:1-3,7). So we should be careful not to carry a false report or condemn the innocent.

A false report raised against someone can make some hate the person against whom the report was made. This is very dangerous. To hate one's neighbour is a sin. It can prevent one from gaining eternal or everlasting life. St. John stated: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3:15). And he who raised the false report against his neighbour will not go unpunished.

After the full facts have been got, one can take sides and pass judgement, provided one does so righteously in all fairness, without hypocrisy. Jesus Christ advised: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement." – John 7:24.

Those who pass judgement rashly without hearing both sides or all the parties involved in a matter act contrary to the law of God. And by so doing, they make themselves judges, even of the law. They are presumptuous. It is dangerous. James the apostle stated: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" - James 4:11-12.

Not long ago, a member reported to me how some members made some uncharitable remarks against him when the devil visited him with misfortune. They showed no sympathy for him neither did they help him. Rather, they judged him from afar and passed sentence on him as an evil-doer. This is very ungodly.

The Bible says that those who raise false reports or say false things to reproach their neighbours cannot remain in God's Organization. – Psalm 15:1-5.

From all I have stated, it is clear that the devil uses some worshippers of God to raise some report which they blend or mix with lies. And some raise a plainly false report against some person or persons to satisfy their devilish desires. And those to whom such reports are made, if not guided by the fear of God, can easily be carried away into passing unjust and rash judgement – not having heard from the accused.

Tale-bearing and rash judgement are evidences of lack of love. We should therefore by putting off these and other vices, show love which the Bible says makes one not to think or do evil to one's neighbour. Please look up 1 Corinthians 13:1-8,13; Hebrews 13:1,16; Romans 13:9,10; etc.

I advise and exhort you therefore not to be carried away into passing judgement based on the one-sided report of some biased members who are not only busybodies but mischief-makers who sow discord and cause hatred and confusion among members in God's Organization. These are bad elements among God's people. God hates them. As it is written: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." - Proverbs 6:16-19. So I exhort you not to be involved in carrying reports as a gossip or tale-bearer, whisperer, backbiter and slanderer. Like St. Paul, we should always serve God with a clear "conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." – Acts 24:16.

A leader in God's Organization is to tell the flock what will bring the blessings of God to them and warn them against what will bring trouble to them. I believe I have done so in this epistle, by God's grace.

May the Almighty God through Jesus Christ our Redeemer help those who are guilty of any of the vices mentioned in this epistle to repent. And may they live to fear Him by doing His will for their own blessings and salvation in the end by His grace and power. Amen.

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